

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully requested. Claims 1-12 are pending in the present application, with claims 1, 3, and 5 being independent. Claims 7-12 have been added by this amendment, which do not add any new subject matter.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejected: claims 1, 3, and 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kobori et al.* (US 5,109,281) and *Kado et al.* (US 5,410,609); and claims 2, 4, and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over *Kobori et al.* and *Kado et al.* and further in view of *Tabata et al.* (US 4,618,991). These rejections are respectfully traversed insofar as they pertain to the presently pending claims.

Independent claim 1 is directed to an image processing method for obtaining a layout image signal representing a layout image in which a plurality of "person images" are arranged. The image processing method of claim 1 obtains the layout image signal from a plurality of original image signals, each representing an image of a person in which a face pattern of the person is embedded. The image processing method of claim 1 comprises the steps of: i) detecting face a face candidate region from each of the original image signals, the face candidate region representing a position and/or a

size of the face pattern of the person in the person image represented by each original image signal, ii) performing a pattern matching process for each face pattern represented by the detected face candidate region to calculate an amount of displacement and/or size difference thereof from a normalized value, iii) performing a face pattern normalizing process on each of the original image signals based on the detected face candidate region and the calculated amount of displacement and/or size difference, a plurality of normalized image signals being obtained from the face pattern normalizing process, and iv) laying out a plurality of images, which are represented by the normalized image signals, in a predetermined layout, whereby the layout image signal representing the thus formed layout image is obtained.

As previously submitted, *Kobori et al.* discloses a video printer arrangement in which a video camera (signal source 1) is positioned relative to an object so that the object is centered relative to the camera. After the object image is taken and stored in memory, a monitor 15 is used to check the position, brightness, and contrast of the object. If the result of this monitoring step is unsatisfactory, the imaging conditions, including positioning of the video camera, are readjusted until a satisfactory image is generated. Col. 4, lines 56-57. Accordingly, the video printer of *Kobori et al.* relies on trial and error for object positioning in an image.

Kado et al. discloses a system for identifying individuals in images and discloses the use of normalization to improve the accuracy of subsequent steps of extracting characteristics from an input image and comparison with characteristic points of facial images stored in a database.

Applicant respectfully submits that the cited art fails to teach or suggest at least that a face candidate region is detected from each of the original image signals, as recited in the amended independent claims.

In fact, neither *Kobori et al.* nor *Kado et al.* contain any teaching that a face candidate region is detected from each of the original image signals. Referring to page 14 of the present application, it is taught that a person's image may be divided into a plurality of regions in accordance with distributions of hue and saturation values in the person image, and that a face candidate region may thus be detected. Thus, because the cited art fails to teach or suggest at least this feature (e.g., that a face candidate region is detected or that the face candidate region is detected in accordance with the distributions of hue and saturation, as recited in the dependent claims), a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be substantiated.

Dependent claims 2, 4, 6, and new claims 7-12 should be considered allowable at least for depending from an allowable base claim.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested in view of the above discussion.

Conclusion

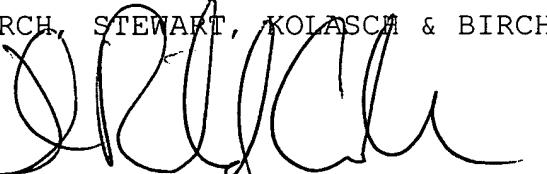
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Martin R. Geissler (Reg. No. 51,011) at the telephone number below, which is located in the Washington, DC area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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